DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 910 CS 007 181

AUTHOR Robinson, Fay
TITLE Parents' Descriptions of Young Children's Behaviors toward Favorite Books.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 59p.; M.A. Thesis, Northwestern University.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Books; *Childhood Interests; *Childrens Literature; Early Experience; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Preschool Children; *Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Interests; *Reading Material Selection; Reading Research

ABSTRACT

To determine parents' perceptions of their children's behaviors toward their favorite books, 15 parents of 4- and 5-year-old children were interviewed about behaviors that occur when they share a favorite book with their children, why they think the book is special to their children, and the pool of available books from which the favorite was chosen. Responses were coded according to naturally occurring categories. The findings indicated that the children participated in many emergent reading behaviors when sharing favorite books, that the books had deep meanings and special relevance to the children, that interaction between parent and child--apart from the reading of the text--was an extremely important part of the activity, that children responded to illustrations and to participatory qualities the books had, and that, for a few children, factors external to the book itself played a role in its importance. Descriptions of the pool of available books indicated that the children had chosen their favorite from a very large group of books that were geared toward their personal needs and interests. (Appendixes include the letters to parents, an interview summary, and a list of the favorite books.) (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy

ED230910

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Parents' Descriptions of Young Children's Behaviors Toward Favorite Books

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Field of Education

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Fay Robinson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

By

Fay Robinson

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

June 1983

CS 007 181

Abstract

This exporatory study examined parents' perceptions of their children's behaviors toward their favorite books. Fifteen parents of four-and five-year-old children were interviewed about behaviors that occur when sharing a favorite book, about why they think the book is special to their children, and about the pool of available books from which the favorite was chosen. Responses were coded according to naturally occurring categories. The findings indicated that the children of these parents participate in many emergent reading behaviors when sharing the favorite books, that the books have deep meanings and special relevance to the children, that interaction between parent and child apart from the reading of the text is an extremely important part of the activity, that children respond to illustrations and to participatory qualities these books have, and that, for a few children, factors external to the book itself play a role in its importance. Descriptions of the pool of available books indicate that these children have chosen their favorite from a very large group of books that is geared toward their personal needs and interests.

The findings about behaviors toward these books lend support to the descriptions and findings of developmental reading theorists and researchers. This study demonstrated that the perceptions of parents are a valuable source of information for developmental reading theories, and that parents and researchers/theorists agree in many of their descriptions of favorite books and behaviors toward them.

PARENTS' DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUNG CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORS TOWARD FAVORITE BOOKS

Introduction

Children's books* represent many children's introduction to literature. Through this medium, much more than a story can be communicated. Children's books present emotions through characters and situations that portray the experiences--real and wishful--of childhood. They present a specialized art form--a unique intermesh of written language and illustration in many diverse applications. They present information--known and unknown--that arouses curiosity or solidifies thougnts and perceptions. They present a special communication between reader and child as an emotion-ridden activity is shared. They also communicate information about written language and reading. These are possible reasons, among others, why many children enjoy being read to.

From among the books that a child hears, favorites are often chosen. Theorists, including Clay (1979), Holdaway (1979), and Sulzby (1985), speculate that favorite books are important to early reading. They suggest that through some combination of factors, children frequently learn information about written language while enjoying these books. If this is

*The term "children's books will be used to describe types of books with which children interact. Several theorists use more specific terms, e.g., "storybooks" and "picture books." These are considered to be subsets of this more general group.

so, favorite books may serve as an important source of motivation in the process of learning to read. While many theorists discuss the importance of favorite books to early reading, none have determined a definition beyond anecdotal reports. Currently, Sulzby (1982a) is investigating children's behaviors toward favorite books. She uses an operational definition of these books as determined by asking children to select "favorites" or recording books children select in a day care setting. Another potential source of definition is parents. They not only have an influence on the books to which their children are exposed, but have insight into their children's behaviors and responses in the home setting. Parents therefore represent important input into research and theories on favorite books. This study examines young children's favorite books and behaviors toward them through the eyes of parents.

The following review of literature will first describe developmental reading theories. This approach to reading addresses the value of book sharing and favorite books to children, and therefore provides the framework for this study. Next, research studies which specifically discuss favorite books and/or story-sharing will be summarized and considered within the context of developmental reading theories.

Developmental Reading

Developmental reading theorists and researchers examine the process of learning to read. These theorists have looked to

children who have seemingly taught themselves to read. An examination of the home environments of these children has led theorists to speculate about a set of factors that promote this "natural" reading (Clark, 1979; Clay, 1979; Durkin, 1966,1974; Holdaway, 1979; Pleasas, 1979; Teale, 1982). The sharing of children's books is one of these factors.

Since developmental learning theory is at the core of these theorists' perceptions, an overview of Piagetian theory will be presented first. Many of the notions of this perspective on development have application to reading; these will be described with the presentation. Next, theorists who ascribe to a developmental reading approach will be discussed. Their references to book-sharing and favorite books will be included. The research explored in this project is built upon this framework.

Piagetian Theory Piagetian theory is a theory of cognitive development that has vast implications to educational psychology. While Piaget did not actually explore reading, his theories have been shown to have pertinance to the acquisition of knowledge about written language (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). The following major notions in Piagetian theory have special relevance to the upcoming discussion of developmental reading theories and to the results of this study.

According to Piagetian theory, learning is an outcome of interaction with the environment. "The establishment of cognitive relations...involve a set of structures progressively

constructed by continuous interaction between the subject and the external world" (Piaget, 1970, p.12). All knowledge is constructed through an interplay of current mental structures and exposure to the object of the learning experience.

In this framework, learning in young children is self-motivated. Internal structures crave stimulation. The child reaches out to her/his environment to fill the need of a specific mental structure. The need may be for assimilation--to practice newly acquired knowledge and generalize its use, or for learning new information which results in accommodation--the adaptation of the information into already existing structures.

This necessity for interaction has broad implications for reading. Learning occurs as the child tries to make sense of his/her world, and written language can be considered another object for his/her discovery (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). The child needs the opportunity to choose stimulation from a selection of written language forms. This includes all objects and products of written language and the opportunity to experiment with them. The child actively seeks knowledge rather than passively awaiting adult-directed instruction.

Another aspect of this perspective is that fluency precedes accuracy. Elkind, in interpreting Piagetian theory, describes this in terms of swimming "Once [the child] feels comfortable in the water...he will learn several strokes,...and be susceptible to instruction. He needs to overcome his fear

of the water, to be fluent in it, before he can develop accuracy in swimming (1976, p.127)." Similarily, qualitative knowledge precedes quantitative knowledge. For example, conceptions of time "are constructed only gradually as the child struggles to arrive at a concept of uniform motion to which all clock and watch hands conform...he is on the way to a true understanding of the measurement of time" (Elkind, 1976, p.119). Children need to develop understandings of generalities before they can understand specifics. This is accomplished through the opportunity to observe, experience, and classify a concept to arrive at its consistancies.

The implications for reading in these notions are that a child needs to become fluent or comfortable with written language before s/he should be expected to be accurate. Qualitative learning will occur as a consequence of exposure to written language in many forms; an understanding of its generalities is prerequisite to an understanding of its individual parts.

Educational implications of Piaget's theories also include the need for respecting the child's contribution to learning in order to preserve his/her self-esteem (Elkind, 1979). Adults need to listen to and support the child's needs. This includes presenting learning situations that have meaning and personal relevance to the child.

Developmental Reading Approaches and Theories Several theorists and researchers may be considered reading

developmentalists based on their emphasis on the learning processes defined in Piagetian theory. The following descriptions of developmental reading have several consistancies including importance placed on the topic of this study: book-sharing and/or favorite books.

The Language-Experience Approach is a developmental reading Approach which has been used successfully in many classrooms. This approach, as described by Lee and van Allen in Learning to Read through Experience (1963), is based on the assumption that all types of communication are integrally connected:

> At the theoretical level the four principal aspects of the language arts--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--have been recognized to be different faces of the same understandings and skills...separation of these aspects of language arts is an adult concept which makes school learning seem arbitrary and incomprehensible to many children. (Lee & van Allen, 1963, p. vi)

Within this approach, learning is viewed as being active rather than passive and all communication stems from Experience. The Language-Experience Approach assumes that true learning occurs when information takes on the personal relevance that experience provides.

The role of book-sharing within this framework is to provide one of many types of experiences in communication that

will inspire children to read. "By hearing the teacher or some other person read aloud lovely poems and stories, there is developed in the heart and mind of children a sympathy for ideas expressed and a desire for self expression" (Lee & van Allen, 1963, p. 40). Stauffer, in another description of language-experience, states that "reading to children should almost be a daily ritual" (Stauffer, 1970, p. 121), and stresses the importance of an attractive library and a respectful attitude toward books as modeled by adults.

Another developmental reading theorist, Marie Clay (1979b), has developed a program to counteract reading failure. She feels "we begin the production of our reading failures by allowing some children to build inefficient systems of functioning" (p. 269). Her theory and research findings propose that reading be seen as a problem-solving activity involving diverse strategies for finding meaning from cues in sentences, contexts, and sound sequences. Through an emphasis on meaning, children develop their own methods for finding, using, checking, and correcting information (p. 269). Words in context can often be read before the same words in isolation; through enough exposure they gradually become part of a reading vocabulary (p. 161).

Clay indicates that much of a child's ability to derive meaning from written language is based on the child's oral language habits. With an understaning of diverse language patterns learned through exposure and experience, a child has a

repertoire of meanings from which to choose appropriate responses and predictions.

Also important to developing flexible prediction strategies, as well as developing motivation for reading, are children's books. In learning to read, " a child needs a mind that is well-stocked; a mind that is active...parents have a responsibility to help their children develop this sort of mind. This is where children's story books come in. There is no substitute for reading and telling stories to children, from the very earliest days." (Butler & Clay, 1982, p.9). From continued exposure children builds "appropriate expectancies" about book language. They learn about the organization of books and the process of reading.

Since many children miss this opportunity before beginning school, Clay has developed a reading method for classroom instruction involving meaning-centered sequential books. From these books and a teacher's guidance, children learn flexible problem solving strategies.

She has also developed a test for "concepts about print" which uses specially designed picture books (Clay,1979a). These books contain errors considered to be indicators of basic knowledge about written language and books. This tool evaluates the child's place in the process of learning using an actual experience to qualify the evaluation. It also presents possible adaptation to any picture book (Goodman, 1982).

Following Clay, Holdaway (1979) suggests a theory of

developmental reading based on developmental learning theories. The interactions between parents and children around children's books are an integral aspect of this perspective. Holdaway believes the earliest learning about written language comes from the intrinsic enjoyment of sharing a book with a parent. "From the child's point of view, the situation is among the happiest and most secure in his experience. The stories themselves are enriching and deeply satisfying...There is a feeling of security and special worth arising from the quality of the attention being received" that gets transferred onto the books themselves (p.40). As a child becomes familiar with a highly enjoyed book, s/he begins what Holdaway calls "reading-like behavior":

> Attracted by the familiar object with which he has such positive associations, the infant... begins attempting to retrieve for himself some of the language and its intonations...This reading-like play rapidly becomes picture stimulated, page matched and story complete. (p.40)

Children who are allowed to discover reading in this way will continue to progress toward complete literacy when they enter school because, according to Holdaway, they have the important beginnings: they know the pleasure a book can bring and expect more of the same, they have become familiar with written symbols and their purpose, they have begun to understand the top-to-bottom, left-to-right organization of words and pages,

they have learned to listen for long periods, and they can attend to words that transcend the here and now (p.49).

These factors and others make up what Holdaway considers to be emergent reading abilities. This term is in direct opposition to prereading skills:

> When we apply a term like "prereading skills" to such behaviors, we demean their real status as early literacy skills, for they actually display all the features of mature strategies already achieving sound and satisfying outcomes well beyond what could be called embryonic- or pre-anything. These strategies, if they are permitted to develop naturally, will lead into mature reading and writing. (p.56)

Sulzby (1982a, 1982b) has developed a scale for assessing emergent reading abilities for favorite storybooks. The scale is called ERAJFS: Emergent Reading Abilities Judgments for Favorite Storybooks. This is part of a larger project called "Beginning Readers' Developing Knowledges about Written Language." Its goal is to describe the transition from emergent-reading to conventional reading as demonstrated by oral and written language behaviors.

The definition of favorite storybook that is used in Sulzby's scale comes from observations of behaviors which children show with certain storybooks:

> Parents have reported that young children often request for a storybook to be read to them over and

over and that they will correct their parent when the parent accidently or deliberately changes the wording of the reading...we have also seen children 'read' these books to themselves, often role-playing being parents or teachers. (Sulzby & Otto, 1982, p. 138)

Sulzby claims that these behaviors are important to eventual reading comprehension.

The scale describes the progression of familiarity toward written language in the reading attempts of young children when asked to read a favorite book. The lowest end of the scale describes "attempts governed by pictures; stories not formed." These behaviors are characterized by labeling and descriptive behaviors with no evidence that the child is creating or remembering a story. The middle level includes "attempts governed by pictures; stories formed." Here the child tells the story in spoken language, or in book language. In the latter, children use written language and reading intonation but are not actually reading from print. In the highest level, "attempts governed by print," the child first may refuse to read the book as s/he knows that pretend reading is different from real reading and s/he cannot actually read. As the child progresses in this stage, s/he may focus on one or more aspect--letter-sound relations, known words, or comprehension--to guide the attempt, later combining them and eventually reading independently from print.

The scale presents an alternative form of evaluation for

preschool and early elementary children. Like Clay's system, it evaluates the child's place in the reading process.

Sulzby stresses the importance of the environment in a child's emergent reading progress:

> The child learns to read from interactions with the physical and social environment, which organizes the output yet the child's cognitive structure, which organizes the input, defines how the input will be internalized. It is the interaction with the environment, however, that helps the child internalize a feedback system to know when s/he is doing an act of reading. (1982a, chapter 2)

This interactive environment includes the individuals who share the books with a child, and the books themselves. The parent, who is most likely to introduce and expose a child to literature, plays an important role in structuring these early reading behaviors.

Teale is another theorist and researcher who subscribes to a a developmental approach to reading. His work with Anderson and Estrada (1980) is an ongoing study about home literacy experiences of low-income preschool children. They are investigating examples of literacy events (defined as "any action sequence involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role"[p.1]). The frequency and character of these events are being analyzed in order to provide information for educators to work more

effectively with low-income children. Interactions around books and other literacy events provide information about the message given by adults about written language.

Teale (1982) discusses the processes of learning to read naturally. Consistent with Piagetian theory, "natural literacy development entails active input from both the perspective of the learner and the perspective of the environment" (p.564). The environment includes opportunities for a child to observe others in literacy events, opportunities to interact around literacy events, and opportunities to independently attempt literacy events.

Teale emphasizes the role of interaction:

> In fact the whole process of natural literacy development hinges upon the experience the child has in reading or writing activities which are mediated by literate adults, older siblings, or events in the child's everyday life. 'Teaching' in this perspective is not traditional instruction, but rather 'fall out' from this social interaction around literacy events as children gradually internalize the information provided by interaction. (p. 561)

Storybook readings are considered to be only one of many types of events which contribute to natural literacy development.

In conclusion, the theories and research described provide the framework for this study. Based in Piagetian developmental theory, this perspective concentrates on the child's learning

process. The authors stress the role of interaction in learning to read, and the importance of children's books as a potential source of knowledge. This examination of children's favorite books, and behaviors toward them as seen through the eyes of parents, falls within these theories.

Other Related Research

The above theorists and researchers explicitly indicate a developmental reading perspective. The following researchers have looked at story-sharing without a specific developmental orientation. (This distinction is made for organizational purposes and is not necessarily clear-cut; some of the notions of the above authors may fall out of the realm of developmental theory, while some of the notions of those that follow may have developmental ingredients.) These studies as a group demonstrate different findings on the effects of book-sharing and lend further support for the importance of the people and books that determine this event. Some of these studies have looked at the effects of booksharing as contributing to reading skills, while others have examined book-sharing as contributing to learning processes.

Book-sharing and Reading Skills There are several studies which have addressed children's books and reading achievement. Durkin (1961), Pleasas (1964), and Clark (1976) all looked at first grade children who could read upon entrance to school, and interviewed their parents about their preschool activities.

Among several presumed influences in their home environments was the fact that these children had frequently shared books with a family member. Similarly, Miller (1969) interviewed parents of first graders about "pre-reading experiences" including sharing picture books. She found that these experiences as a group correlated positively with reading scores.

Durkin (1975) conducted an intervention study in which she designed a two year preschool program based on factors drawn from her previous research that appeared to be conducive to the promotion of early reading. Among those factors was exposure to books. Reading achievement of the children who attended this program was followed through fourth grade. She found that reading achievement scores these children remained higher than those of a control group throughout this time.

Other studies that looked at reading skills include two works on interactional styles. Darobi (1979) trained parents in question asking and encouragement strategies for use during book-sharing sessions. She found that participating children showed higher gains in "reading readiness" than other children. Flood (1977) studied parents as they read to preschool children and found four parent-initiated styles that correlated with higher reading abilities: preparation, question asking and answering, positive reinforcement and post-story evaluation.

This group of studies examines the effect of book-sharing and other events on standardized achievement or word knowledge

tests. The following studies examine book-sharing as it affects learning processes, and therefore are more consistent with developmental reading theories.

Book-sharing and Learning Processes In examining reading processes, many researchers have looked to the interaction between child and adult for information. Heath (1982) investigated the different interactional styles of parents and their children in two different lower-class communities around the activity of book sharing. She found that different types of interaction led to different abilities and deficits in school learning. Heath inferred that different styles of thinking can be promoted while sharing a book, and these styles need to be understood by parents and teachers.

Cochran-Smith (1982) investigated preschool story time, focusing on the social-interactional aspects of the activity. She determined that stories were "cooperatively negotiated," and this, she speculated, helps children in their later independent reading.

Doake (1982) examined the reading development of preschool children as it occurred in the home setting. The behaviors of children and their parents during book-sharing experiences were analyzed to determine their impact on reading development. Doake concluded that learning to read was a self-regulated developmental task that resulted from regular parent-child interactions with books, especially with favorite books. Positive attitudes that evolved from these experiences

"resulted in the development of a powerful inner drive to gain independent access to their favourite stories" (p. vi). Reading-like behavior was seen as a means to reproduce these stories, and was observed to lead to increasing control over the non-visual and visual aspects of print.

Another group of studies looked at the influence of book-sharing in language development. Green's (1982) work focused on conversational factors that evolve from what she defined as the three components of sharing a story in a classroom: student, teacher, and text. Teacher's communication strategies should involve the intersection of these components. Green concluded that children can learn communicative competence from well managed story readings.

Ninio (1980) examined the interaction around books of two different social class groups in Israel. She found three different "dyadic interaction styles": "what" questions leading to labeling behavior from the child, "where" questions leading to pointing responses, and information-giving by the mother, maintaining non-participation of the child. She found lower SES mothers used the latter two styles more often than "what" questions which allowed for fewer verbal responses from the child. Ninio suggested that these findings may help account for the lower language and intellectual abililties of the lower SES group in her study.

Fodor (1966) carried out an intervention study in which 20- to 30-month-old children were read to for 20 minutes a day

for three months. He found that these children gained significantly more receptive and expressive vocabulary than a control group.

Studies on the effects of book-sharing on learning processes offer important insight into the value of book-sharing. They indicate that interaction around children's books contribute in important ways to children's language development, emergent reading abilities, and school learning. The existance and findings of this body of literature lend further support for a closer look at behaviors toward and perceptions of the most influential books-- favorites--as seen through the eyes of the most influential adults--parents.

Summary

Developmental reading perspectives look to the child's construction of knowledge and written language through interaction with his/her environment. Various aspects of this process are examined by these theorists, including children's interaction with children's books and with adults while sharing them. Other related research, while not necessarily developmental in nature, supports the value of the book-sharing experience for a child.

The research reviewed contains recurrent references to the role of adults in the development of reading behaviors and to the impact and importance of exposure to books. This study attempts to discover some of the behaviors toward and descriptions of favorite picture books as perceived by parents.

Three general areas of information are addressed--the behaviors of children and parents around children's favorite books, the parents' perceptions of why the books is special to their child, and the pool of available books from which these children's favorites are chosen. Due to the limited size and characteristics of the group of parents interviewed, this study is considered exploratory. Further research is needed to solidify the indications presented.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of the interview were parents of 15 children who attend the Wesley Day Care Center in Glenview, IL. These children had participated in a year-long study of storybook reading (Sulzby, in preparation). The original group of 32 children were characterized as follows:

> Two-thirds of the children come from families that pay full tuition, while one-third of the children come from families that pay reduced tuition because of limited income. Slightly less than one-half the children are in one-parent families. About one-fourth of the children are from Black, Hispanic, Oriental, Iranian or East Indian families. (Otto, in press, p.5)

From this group, 19 children were still attending the center at the commencement of this study. Parents of those children were contacted by letter (Appendix A) and given the option to participate. Fifteen parents--14 mothers and one father--agreed to be interviewed. Because of school policy the four who did not respond to the letter were not pursued. (The director of the school was later asked to characterize these four parents in order to determine any reasons for their disinterest. Two parents were reported to be Spanish-speaking with limited ability in English. In all other ways the four were characteristic of the total group.)

Procedure

Parents who responded to the letter were contacted by phone to set up an interview. In the case of two-parent families, the interview was arranged wtih the parent who reads most often to the child. All interviews were conducted at the day care center with one exception--a parent who preferred to be interviewed by phone. All were tape recorded except two--the above parent (because of difficulties recording over the phone) and a parent who chose not to be recorded. For those parents, interview responses were hand-written.

Parents had brought in two of their child's favorite books for a previous study by Sulzby (in preparation). In a letter to the parents, Sulzby described the books as follows: "They should be current favorites and have been favorites for at least two weeks." This wording left the actual definition of "favorite" up to the parent. In the current study, parents were reminded of the books they had selected as favorites. In order to focus the interview on a single book, parents were asked, "Is one of these books more special than the other?" Ten parents answered positively, indicating the presence of one "most favorite" book. Five parents thought both were equally special to their child, and were then asked, "Has one of these books been a favorite for a longer time?" All of these parents except one were aware of one book being special longer. Although their children apparently have more than one favorite,

the book favorite for a longer time is presumably more stable, or at least more familiar. One parent indicated that the favorites were equally special and purchased at the same time. (That parent was asked to answer each question in reference to both books. However, she indicated that all her child's behaviors were the same with the two books.) With the exception of this last parent, questions were asked in reference to the single most favorite or longer-favorite book.

The parents were asked the remaining interview questions and given the opportunity to ask questions or comment before and after the interview.

Interview Questions

1. I understand you brought in (book title) and (book title) as (child's name)'s two favorite books. Is one of these more special than the other?
   If no--
   Which of these two has been a favorite longer?
   The rest of the interview will be in reference to that book.

2. Does (child's name) ever read or pretend to read this book?

3. Does (child's name) prefer to share this book with you or to look at it by him/herself?

4. Can you describe his/her behavior while looking at this book?

5. Can you describe what you do when you share this book with (child's name)?

6. Who usually picks (book title) to share--you or (child's name)?

7. About how many times have you and (child's name) shared this book?
   Over what period of time?

8. Does (child's name) ever correct you when you change the the wording of this book?

9. What about the book makes it a special one for (child's name)?

10. Where do the children's books that (child's name) sees come from?

11. What are some of the things you look for when you select a book for (child's name)?
Which of the things you mentioned is most important?

12. About how many books are available to (child's name) at one time?

The interview questions were designed to induce information about the parent's and child's behaviors when sharing the books, the parent's perceptions of why the book is special, and the pool of books from which this favorite was chosen. The several forced-choice questions were aimed at finding information about behavior that, according to research previously discussed, might be important. This information was sought in questions two, three, six seven and eight. Other questions were open-ended. Questions four, five, and nine were designed to allow the parents to generate their own interpretations and conclusions about these books and behaviors around them. Questions ten, 11, and 12 were asked to determine the characteristics of the books available to the child with the assumption that what is available to a child would place constraints around what s/he could choose as a favorite.

The order and wording of the questions was determined in collaboration with the director of the day care center. The

intention was to insure that parents who may not spend a great deal of time reading to their children did not feel guilty or imposed upon. Questions which were perceived to be least threatening were asked at the beginning of the interview to make parents feel comfortable. The questions about the pool of available books (ten, 11, 12) were asked at the end--as these might be more threatening to a parent who does not place a priority on books for their child.

After all the interviews were completed, the taped and hand-written interviews were reviewed to determine the range of reponses. Categories were determined based on the commonalities in the responses to each question. The recorded and written responses were then re-examined and coded by question into these categories (Appendix B). Occasionally, parents had included information that pertained to a different question in an answer. In these cases the information was coded under the question to which it applied. After coding-by-question was complete, categories that spanned several questions were combined for ease in discussion (as follows).

Reliability was checked by a second adult considered to be familiar with the background and goals of this study. Categories and responses within them were discussed until agreement was reached.

Results and Discussion

The categories of responses will be discussed according to the eight broader topics into which they fell. Descriptions of and references to emergent reading behaviors, deep meanings, intense affinity, interaction, reactions to illustrations, reactions to participatory qualities, external influences, and the pool of available books will be examined. The 15 parents who participated frequently gave more than one answer to the open-ended questions. Therefore discussions of the responses often total more than 100%. Related research is provided as speculation about why these descriptions appeared.

Emergent Reading Behaviors

The answers to several questions alluded to many to the emergent reading behaviors described by Holdaway (1979) and Sulzby (1982a; 1982b) and Sulzby and Otto (1982). Most of the responses included in this category refer to children's signs of memory for text, and are assumed to fit Sulzby's description from her own observations: "Children give these recitations not as if a tape recorder were being played, but as if it is their intention to recover text as a unit of language that exists stably and can be retrieved" (1982a, chapter 4). Behaviors under this topic include reading and pretend reading, anticipation of story, corrections of adult errors, and dramatic participation.

When asked, "Does (child's name) ever read or pretend to

read this book?" 13 of 15 parents answered positively. When asked, "Can you describe (child's name)'s behavior while looking at this book?" 12 parents mentioned behaviors that could be considered emergent reading abilities. Among this group, two described independent reading, two described pretend-reading, and one described reading in chorus, i.e., "she knows the pages quite well so she'll read along with me." Six of the remaining parents who described their child's emergent reading behaviors spoke of their child's ability to anticipate the story line, e.g., "she'll tell us what's going to happen." One other parent said, "he tries to remember every word...I mean word for word," but did not elaborate. Four of this group also mentioned the role of illustrations in eliciting the child's memory of the story, e.g., "she can remember what's on the page by looking at the pictures."

Parents were asked, "Does your child ever correct you when you change the wording of this book?" Twelve answered positively while only two answered negatively and one parent reported she never had changed the wording. The two negative answers were given by parents who described unusual books. These therefore merit examination. One parent stressed that the book contained "not much text...no strong story line" and described the large amount of interaction that occurs between herself and her child while sharing this book. This indicates the small role the words play to this parent and child and possibly explains the child's lack of response to changed

wording. The other negative answer came from a parent whose child's favorite books are two books accompanied by a record. This implies that the rcording rather than the parent reads the book to the child, which removes the possiblity that the parent could change the words.

Another less obvious indication of memory was mentioned by four parents who described their child's dramatic behavior around these books: "[He] talks like the dinosaur talks;" "She imitates the animals [their actions];" "She acts like a drama student...if it's a sad part she shows sadness...;" "[He] goes into flying motions [like the character]." While these behaviors do not show memory for the words of a story, they do show assimilation of information of another sort. Rather than (or in addition to) exercising understandings and memories of words or story, these children are exercising understandings of emotion and personality.

The first three behaviors--pretend reading and reading, anticipation, and corrections of parents' mistakes--are described by Sulzby (1982a; 1982b) and Sulzby and Otto (1982), and Holdaway (1979). Sulzby's scale in fact documents the sequence of anticipatory and reading behaviors that these children display. Holdaway contrasts these behaviors to rote memory, concluding that these memory behaviors serve as indications of the child's deep understanding of the story.

The final category--dramatic behaviors--is partially discussed by Sulzby (1982 b). At level 2B of the ERAJFS scale,

she describes the dramatic dialogue of children in attempts to recreate favorite storybooks. "The child may create dialogue to go along with the pictures often depending on 'voices' for characters." While one of the children described did exactly that, according to parents there were three who demonstrated physical dramatic behaviors. These too reflect the deep processes of emerging understandings--not as much of the text itself but of the emotions and personalities that appear between the lines (or in the illustrations). These actions present a possible extension of the behaviors described in level 2B of Sulzby's scale (personal communication, Sulzby, 1983).

Deep Meanings

Holdaway indicates that the above behaviors are reflections of the deep meanings these books have for their readers. Responses to several questions refer to the great personal relevance and meaning the favorite books have to these children. These responses include references to emotional reactions, subconscious developmental issues, the child's special interests, and past encounters with authors, stories, or characters.

An indication of the child's involvement in these books can be found in several vague answers to the question "Can you describe (child's name)'s behavior while looking at this book?" Thirteen of 15 parents described emotional reactions such as "excited," "enthusiastic," and "intent." These terms imply a

deep emotional commitment to this book-sharing experience.

Within the interview answers, there are many possible explanations for this intensity, including responses to the question "What about this book do you think mades it a special one for (child's name)?" Five parents described developmental/psychological issues that the child was attending to. Comments included references to identification with a character or situation such as "at four and a half he loves his superheros...hopefully we all have our heros," and "it's a dream too for her to be able to go out and show the snowman around."

Apart from unconscious meanings the books may have, five parents mentioned their children's special interests in the book's topic when answering the same question. These comments were specific: "likes food...[so he likes] the eating part" and "because he likes dinosaurs."

Again, in answer to "What makes this book a special one for (child's name)?" six parents mentioned a familiarity to the characters, story, or author from past encounters. Two comments were about books by the same author, e.g., "she has other Richard Scarry books...she knows those characters." Two referred to Sesame Street--"She's real into Sesame Street and [recognizes] the characters." One parent thought that the fact that "We have...all the Superman things" contributed to that book's specialness, while another thought that the fact that her child had seen the movie Cinderella made that book special

to her child.

These references to the special meanings the books have for these children find support in developmental learning theory. According to Holdaway, "The stories [children] love abound in examples of the most central structures involved in early cognitive development..." (1979, p. 54).

At the core of developmental theory is the notion that learning is self-motivated and occurs as a child's mental structures are ready to accomodate to or assimilate new information. Children's chosen activities and interests reflect these internal pursuits.

As support for the unconscious relevance in these books to these children, Elkind describes an aspect of this time period (2-6 years old) for children. "As they recognize their relative powerlessness, discover dangers and encounter unpleasant people and experiences, they begin to express fears and anxieties in dreams and symbolic play. The fascination that superheros have for some children is a case in point" (1981, p. 100). Children choose activities that help them play out the developmental issues they encounter.

Other more conscious interests take of similar fascination. A child's choice of a favorite book with familiar characters, story, or authors may reflect an interest in building upon or reinforcing the mental structures that reflect a child's place in development.

Intense Affinity

The deep meaning these books have to these children is reflected in several expressions of intense affinity toward them. The fact that there was a single favorite book for most children, that they read it over and over, and that they chose and sustained this book-sharing activity beyond the will of their parents demonstrates this intensity.

Parents were asked, "How many books are available to (child's name) at one time?" The median was "about 100." While the answers were very roughly estimated by these parents (as evident by their tone), the fact that there was a single favorite book within such a large group is a statement of its impact on these children.

Asked, "How many times have you and (child's name) shared this book?" the roughly estimated answers had a median to 30. The range was ten to "60 to 75." Asked, "Over what period of time?" parents' answers had a median of 12 months in a range of less than one month to "two or three years." With a choice of many possible books, that a book is read 30 times, and interest for that book is maintained for more than a year implies a huge vested interest.

When asked, "Who usually chooses this book to share--you or (child's name)?" parents indicated 14 of the 15 children usually chose the book. Eight parents showed an obvious weariness about the books in their voice and tone. In explaining their own behaviors, how many times they had shared

the book, and who usually picked it out, an indication of exasperation was common--"I don't mean it in a discouraging way, but I'll say, 'But we've read it so many times...'" or "I'm tired of it to be honest." Clearly, some internal desire keeps these children going even after their parents are exhausted.

The actions and desires of these children are supported by the developmental needs already discussed. As summarized by Holdaway, "The request to 'read it again' arises from a natural and important developmental demand...As in the mastery of other developmental tasks, self-selection rather that adult direction characterizes the specific tasks which will be intensively practiced by the infant." And, according to Sulzby and Otto (1982) these requests for rereading also relate to memory. A favorite book represents the extreme of a child's book preferences, and so these behaviors (that can occur around any enjoyed books according to these theorists) are predictably intense.

Interaction

Descriptions of various types of interaction were reported by parents. A general statement about the importance of interaction is indicated in response to the question "Does (child's name) prefer to share this book with you or to look at it by her/himself?" All 15 parents indicated that their child preferred to share the book. While an occasional parent did add that the child like to look at it alone too, that all

children in this group are perceived to prefer sharing is an important comment on the role interaction plays. References to interaction that appeared in other questions can be described as verbal interaction, intimacy, attendance to cues, or adult dramatization. These categories overlap somewhat, but have distinct characteristics.

A majority of parents described different verbal interactions that occurred around the sharing of this book. These comments specified verbal communication apart from the actual reading of the text. Included in this group are those children previously mentioned who showed verbal signs of memorization. Seven parents verbally interact in ways that might be considered instructional, that is, communication with the intention of imparting or eliciting knowledge. These reports include "ask him questions" and "point things out, help him understand." Other types of verbal interaction include description of a child who "asks a lot of questions about the stories on each page" and three cases where the parent intentionally changes the words or the story "to see if he's really listening," as one reported.

When asked to describe their child's behavior while sharing the book and later their own behavior while sharing the book, five parents made reference to a physical or emotional specialness that could be labeled intimacy. Comments include "She likes to cuddle [while sharing this book]" and "He'll tell me [the story]--he's relating to me."

Another group of responses that were considered as interaction were reports of parents attending to the cues of their child. Six parents gave details like, "[I] try to get just as enthused [as my child]," and "she acts as teacher and we're her students and we have to be quiet and she reads to us." These reactions represent the parent's attempts to interpret and reinforce their child's behaviors toward these books.

Another group of responses that were considered to be indications of interaction were statements about the parent's dramatic behaviors. Six parents in this group, when describing their behavior while sharing the book, reported things like "I put emotion into [how] things [are said]" and "mimic how the characters would say things." Unlike children, adults do not typically show these types of behaviors unless in the presence of an audience. Thus, these behaviors have an interactive purpose. They may be interpreted as attempts to communicate meanings deeper than the words themselves convey (the counterpart of the child's dramatic-dialogue behavior which show they have acquired these same understandings).

There were five parents who expressly said that they just read through the book, e.g., "I basically just read it to her and that's about it." This implies no additional interaction. But, as they expressed in a different context, four of these parents did actually interact either before or after reading it and/or during by dramatizing. Even these parents who claimed

that they did not do anything more than read through the book actually did interact and reinforce their child's understandings.

These recurrent descriptions of many types of interactive behaviors indicate the integral role interaction has for these children and parents while sharing these favorite books. Interaction in book-sharing has been discussed by many researchers and theorists. Holdaway states, "...for the parents who engage in it, reading books to their youngsters provides deep satisfaction and pleasure...It is a simple giving and taking of pleasure in which the parent makes no demands on the child, but is deeply gratified by the lively responses and questions that normally arise. It provides a stimulus for satisfying interaction between parent and child..." (1979, p.39).

Others, as previously mentioned, hypothesize about the role adult-child interaction takes in book sharing: as an influence on literacy development in the home (Teale, 1982; Anderson, Teale & Estrada, 1982), as a feedback system about reading which can then be internalized by the child (Sulzby, 1982a), as a means to arrive at a "cooperatively negotiated" understanding of text in a classroom setting which serves to help the child function independently later (Cochran-Smith, 1982), as a tool to help teach communicative competence (Green, 1982), as an important influence on later school learning (Heath, 1982).

Most often, interaction is discussed by these researchers in reference to all story sharing. Therefore the fact the the behaviors occur around favorite books would be predictable. It is likely they contribute to a book's specialness and the ease with which a child takes meaning from it. Certainly, the pleasure that a parent and child derive from sharing a special book would contribute to the frequency which that book is shared. This in turn would contribute to the likelihood that the behaviors and reactions that these parents described could evolve.

Illustrations

While, unlike the above topics, illustrations were not mentioned in a wide array of questions, they were addressed with some consistency in response to two questions. When asked, "Can you describe (child's name) behavior while looking at this book?" six parents mentioned the child's attendance to the illustrations including the four previously described in reference to memory. Two others said that their child just "looks at the pictures." When asked to analyze "What makes this book a special one for your child," two parents commented on illustrations, e.g., "some of the drawings appeal to her."

According to theorists, illustrations help children derive meaning from the text. Holdaway explains, "[Illustrations] are special mediating symbols which replace the real environments of conversation until they can be fully replaced by mental images in mature reading" (1979, p.54). Children use

illustrations to gain the clues to meaning that are normally be available through sensory information from the real world.

Sulzby also describes children's use of illustrations: "In children's early story 'readings' I saw children treating the pictures as if the action were on-going before they gradually began to treat the pictures as a decontextualized entity..." (1982a, ch 4). In the less mature levels of Sulzby's emergent reading scale (Sulzby and Otto, 1982; Sulzby 1982a; 1982b), reenactment of favorite books is characterized by attempts governed by pictures. The pictures serve as catalysts for the memory of favorite books as demonstrated in labeling and commenting attempts, action-governed attempts, oral language-like attempts, and written lanaguage-like attempts.

Participatory Quality

Many parents described participatory and/or manipulative aspects of these favorite books. These descriptions defined responses elicited by the book itself other than listening. The comments can be broken into two groups--those that delineate intellectual participation and that delineate physical manipulation.

In answering the question "Can you describe (child's name) behavior while looking at this book?" three parents addressed their child's intellectual participation with the book. Two described their child's verbal response to questions in the books, while another spoke of the book's instruction to search

the pages for letters of the alphabet, and her child's attempts to "find all the little red ones."

Three other parents describe books that require manipulation. One parent talked about the fact that her child's favorite book was a pop-up book "that he can manipulate". Another mentioned the fold-out pages of her child's favorite. A third explained that her child's favorite books were accompanied by a record; the child must handle a record and record player as part of the sum of this book's enjoyment.

That children choose favorite books which elicit participation can be perhaps explained by Piagetian psychology:

> Actually, in order to know objects, the subject must act upon them, and therefore transform them: he must displace, connect, combine, take apart, and reassemble them. From the most elementary sensorimotor actions...to the most sophisticated intellectual operations, which are carried out mentally..., knowledge is constantly linked with actions or operations (Piaget, 1970, p. 12).

The child not only initiates his/her own actions toward the book, but these books provide their own idiosyncratic activities. While this may or may not affect how special the story itself is, it may contribute to the book's specialness as an object (which then could influence the response to its other aspects).

External Factors

A final topic only came up in response to the question "What makes this book a special one for (child's name)?" Three parents described factors external to the book itself. While this aspect was not mentioned often, it is important to consider that the contents of a book are not necessarily the only influence on its specialness to a child.

Two parents referred to the feelings of ownership their child had about the book. "This one was given to her [as opposed to books shared with a sister]...there is a feeling of ownership." The other parent similarily described that the book was the property of the child as opposed to other hand-me-downs. Another parent felt that her child did not actually have a preferred book, but chose this book because it was her mother's favorite.

The feelings of ownership may be partially explained by developmental theory. The period of development for these children (preoperational) is partially characterized by symbolic function. Things that belong to a child at this stage may be misconstrued to be extensions of the child him/herself:

> The attachment to and investment in symbols helps explain why it is difficult for young children [2-6 years] to separate from people and things they consider their own...Children have difficulty sharing not because they are selfish in the adult sense but because sharing something that is part of the

symbolic 'me' is like sharing part of the self.

(Elkind, 1981, p. 101)

Those books that are special because the child "owns" them may possibly have taken on this symbolic value.

The child whose favorite book is actually her mother's favorite may be modeling or identifying with the mother's emphasis on the book for uncertain individual or developmental reasons. It is likely that other individual and developmental influences may have an impact on the choice of a favorite book--a book from a favorite grandparnt, a book that comforted during a crisis in the child's life, etc.

The Pool of Available Books

Several questions were asked in specific reference to the types and numbers of books available to these children with the assumption that the characteristics of these books would place constraints around the choice for a favorite. Also, a description of the pool serves to put these parents' responses and descriptions within their own framework. Information determined from the interviews includes: the number of books available to the child, the sources of these books, and the types of choices parents make when they select them.

Parents were asked, "How many books are available to (child's name) at one time?" The responses ranged from "15 or 16" to "two or three hundred" with a median of "about 100." (Some parents had a great deal of difficulty answering this question, and most at least expressed uncertainty in their

voices. Therefore the range and median can only be considered very rough estimations.) When asked, "Where do the children's books that (child's name) sees come from?" 13 parents indicated their children see books that the parent buys, five children go to the library, five see siblings' books, five bring books home from kindergarten or day care, four belong to book clubs, two receive books from their grandmothers, and one receives books handed down from her mother. Notable is the large number of books available to these children and the variety of sources from which they come. This group of children clearly has vast exposure to books.

Apart from the number and sources of available books, the types of books which are present in this group would also play a role in the choices that are available to these children. Parents were asked, "What things do you look for when you select a book for your child?" The criterion mentioned most often by parents was selection based on the needs and interests of their child. Twelve of the 15 parents indicated their concern for their child's interest or understanding. Nine parents choose books based on their complexity, e.g., "some challenge in the vocabulary," and, "easy to understand...if too many sentences she seems to get bored." Five parents buy books according to their child's interests, stating either generally that they choose a book "if it would interest her" or more specifically, "he enjoys sensitive stories...happy endings."

Five parents suggested that their values help determine

their choices. Three were concerned with sexism ("not geared toward either sex--no sexist judgment"), one wants her child to "know there's a real world out there," and one "stays away from grim fairy tales where characters get their heads cut off."

Six parents indicated that illustrations were important in comments such as "colorful," "nice," and "real...not abstract" when describing the pictures they choose. Three others pay attention to the mood or tone of the book when selecting. Statements included "cute, comical" and "soothing."

Other less frequent responses to this question ("What do you look for when selecting a book for your child?") include comments from two parents who select books with educational goals in mind--"counting, up-down, words... something she can learn from rather than just a story" and other single responses--a parent who selects based on an older sister's preferences, a parent who looks for award-winning books, a parent who chooses books that have "involvement for her--emotional or physical" one who prefers "books that don't look too much like a reader," a parent who lets the child do her own selecting, one who picks out "character books," and one who tries to "get a realm of emotion--happy, sad."

In order to narrow down the range of qualities, parents who listed more than one criterion were asked, "Of those things you mentioned, which is the most important?" The responses of the seven parents who were asked this question (due to interviewer error, three were overlooked) were combined with

the five parents who named only one criterion-- considered therefore to be the most important. Six parents consider the needs and interests of their child to be most important, two consider illustrations to be the most important, two consider their values first, one considers educational quality and one considers emotional or physical involvement.

The most outstanding aspect of the selection processes of these parents is their consideration of their children. That 12 or 15 parents consider the needs and interests of their child when choosing books, and half or them look to that criterion first, presents further testimony for the value of the interaction around these books. Knowing that a book "would interest her" or be boring to their child (as parents stated) reflects the parents' learned understandings of their responses to books. Other categories, particularily parent values, educational quality and award winners, reflect more adult-centered interests, but these criteria were less pervasive.

The sketch that can be drawn about the pool of books available to these children is that it is very large, mostly store-bought by parents, and mostly comprised of books that fit the child's needs and interests. If this is an accurate picture, these children have a large and personally interesting selection of books available at home. The choice of a single favorite by most children from such a pool is a strong indication of its impact on these chidren.

Limitations to the Study and Areas of Further Investigtion

The information gleaned from these interviews serves to describe parents' perceptions of their children's favorite books and behaviors around them. In order for this information to be generalized, many limitations need to be overcome in further research investigations.

Within this study, consideration must be given to the possible reasons why four parents chose not to participate. Since two were Spanish-speaking, perhaps they could not read the letter which invited them to be a part of the study. Or, conceivably, the prospect of an interview was overwelming (although arrangements had been made to hold the interview in Spanish, but they were not aware of this). For them or the others, possibly the idea of an interview was unappealing, or maybe the interview fell during a particularily busy time. (According to the director of the center, there was nothing notable in their circumstances, SES, or backgrounds other than the language differences that could explain their disinterest.)

It is also conceivable that parents who did not participate prefer not to discuss their story-sharing experiences because they feel uninformed about their child's preferences and behaviors. Thus this group may represent children rarely exposed to books at home (or exposed with disinterest). Further research should insure that this category of pisnts is included, as they represent many people in the general population. A more complete picture could be

obtained if a future study included a non-threatening approach to these parents--perhaps if the introductory letter was written in the native language of all parents and reference was made to the fact that an interpreter would be available. Another option would be to present an opportunity to meet the interviewer in a casual setting before a letter is sent. Some kind of incentive might also help--coffee and donuts--something to make the interview worth their while even if they are disinterested.

A broader limitation to this study is the sample size and composition. This interview was conducted on 15 parents from an upper-middle class suburb. These parents, while not all upper-middle class themselves, live in an upwardly mobile town with a strong school system. This possibly may reflect in the attitude of some parents toward education and reading. This, in turn, could affect the exposure to literacy in the home, the attitude for and reinforcement toward their children's interests in books, and the atmosphere around the book-sharing experience. In order to draw more solid conclusions, a future study should include a broader and larger sample. An attempt should be made to balance the literacy backgrounds in the group.

Parents from this sample may also have slanted their responses to what they felt they "should" say. If this group of parents actually does place a high value on education, they may feel compelled to answer questions in

"literate-appropriate" ways. It is possible they may have exaggerated their children's exposure to books and their children's and their own behaviors. However, this limitation would not necessarily be confined to a suburban group; this bias may occur in any interview situation that covers an emotionally charged subject. It should be taken into consideration when weighing the conclusions.

A final limitation of this study is the fact that it is impossible to determine how much of this information about behaviors and reactions is specific to favorite books, and how much of it occurs around all book-sharing experiences. Two sets of interview questions--one about favorite books and one about all books--would allow for a comparison. Or, parents could be observed sharing favorite books and then non-favorite books with their child, and the behaviors compared. These situations would set up the possiblility to distinguish between behaviors that are specific to favorite books, and those that are part of a parent's and child's general story-sharing routine.

Summary

This exploratory study has attempted to examine parents' perceptions of children's favorite books and behaviors toward them. The findings indicate that these children participate in many emergent reading behaviors, that the books have deep meanings and special relevance to the children, that interaction between parent and child apart from the reading of the text is an extremely important part of the activity, that children respond to illustrations and participatory qualities these books have, and that, for a few children, factors external to the book itself play a role it its importance. Descriptions of the pool of available books indicate that these children have chosen their favorite from a very large group of books that is geared toward their personal needs and interests. This information serves as a further statement on the impact and importance of these favorites.

The findings about behaviors toward these books support the descriptions and results of developmental reading theorists and researchers. Most specifically, this information contributes to the notions presented by Holdaway (1979) and Sulzby (1982a; 1982b).

While the findings presented cannot be considered conclusive because of limitations in the sample, this study presents an arena for further research which is important. Within the framework of developmental reading theories, interaction with parents around children's books is considered

to be one of many experiences that contribute to children's reading processes. Investigations of adult-child book sharing have been based on empirical research in which the perceptions and conclusions are determined by researchers and theorists. This study has demonstrated that the perceptions of parents are an important source of information, and that parents and researchers/theorists agree in many of their conclusions about favorite books and behaviors toward them.

REFERENCES

Anderson, A., Teale, W. & Estrada, E. Low-income children's preschool literacy experiences: Some naturalistic observations. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, San Diego, 1982.

Butler, D & Clay, M. Exeter, Reading begins at home. Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

Clark, M. Young fluent readers. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976.

Clay, M. The early detection of reading difficulties: A diagnostic survey with recovery procedure. Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979a.

Clay, M. Reading: The patterning of complex behavior. Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979b.

Cochran-Smith, M. A case study of preschool literacy socialization. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1982.

Darabi, T. M. Effects of a program of father-child and mother child reading on children's reading readiness (Doctoral dissertation, University of Florida, 1979). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1980,41,81A. (University Microfilms No. DEM80-16521)

Doake, D. Book experience and emergent reading behavior. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1982.

Durkin, D. Children who learned to read at home. Elementary School Journal, 1961, 62, 15-18.

Durkin, D. A six year study of children who learned to read at home at the age of four. Reading Research Quarterly, 1974, 10, 9-61.

Elkind, D. Child development and education. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Elkind, D. The hurried child. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1981.

Flood, J. E. Parental styles in reading episodes with young children. Reading Teacher, 1977, 8, 864-867.

Ferreiro, E., & Teberosky, A. Literacy before schooling. Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

Fodor, E. The effect of the systematic reading of stories on the language development of culturally deprived children (Doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1966). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1966, 27, 952A. (University Microfilms No. 66-10261)

Goodman, Y. Concepts about print. In M. Clay (Ed.), Observing young readers: Selected papers. Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982, 83-88.

Green, J. Reading to children: A communicative process. In Reader meets author /Bridging the gap. IRA: 1982, 196-221.

Heath, S. B. What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and at school. Language in Society, 1982, 11, 49-76.

Holdaway, D. The foundations of literacy. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1979.

Lee, D., & van Allen, R. Learning to read through experience. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1963.

Miller, W. Home prereading experiences and first grade reading achievement. Reading Teacher, 1969, 44, 641-645.

Ninio, A. Picture book reading in mother-infant dyads belonging to two subgroups in Israel. Child Development, 1980, 51, 589-594.

Otto, B. Tracking emergent reading behaviors through storybook re-enactments. National Reading Conference Yearbook, in press.

Piaget, J. Piaget's theory. In B. Inhelder, & H. Chipman, (Eds.), Piaget and his school. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1976, 11-23. (Appeared originally in Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology, [Vol. 1], New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970, 703-710.)

Pleasas, G. Prereading experiences of selected early readers. Reading Teacher. 1964, 17, 2414-2445.

Stauffer, R. The language-experience approach to the teaching of reading. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Sulzby, E. Beginning readers' developing knowledges about written language: BRDKAWL project 1980-1982. Final report to the National Institute of Education (NIE-G-80-0176). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, Part 1, 1982a; Part 2, in progress.

Sulzby, E. Children's emergent reading of favorite storybooks: A developmental study. Revised edition of paper titled "A scale for judging emergent reading of favorite storybooks," presented at 32nd meeting of National Reading Conference, Clearwater Beach, Florida, December 1-4, 1982.

Sulzby, E. Personal communication, April 30, 1983.

Sulzby, E. & Otto, B. Text as an object of metalinguistic knowledge: A study in literacy development. First Language, 1982,3, 181-199.

Teale, W. H. Toward an theory of how children learn to read and write naturally. Language Arts, 1982, 59, 555-570.

Appendix A

January 3, 1983

Parent:

I am a student working with Elizabeth Sulzby on research about children's storybook reading. I am interested in the books children choose as favorites. I feel that parents have the most complete understanding of their children's preferences and behaviors. Therefore, your input is very valuable.

I would like to interview you about the books you sent in to Dr. Sulzby as favorites. All interviews will be completely confidential, and, again, your participation is optional.

The interview usually takes between five and ten minutes. If you agree to participate, I will be calling you to set up a time to talk. We can arrange to have the interview after school one day, or over the phone at a convenient time.

If you choose to participate, please write your name and phone number below, and return the bottom half of this paper to your child's teacher.

Thanks!

Sincerely,

Fay Robinson

YES, I am interested in participating

Name:_____

Phone Number:_____

APPENDIX B: Interview Summary

N=15
Totals equal more than 100% where parents gave more than one response to a question.

1. I understand you brought in (book title) and (book title) as (child's name)'s two favorite books. Is one of these books more special than the other?
   - yes 10
   - no 5

   If no--

   Which of these two has been a favorite longer?
   - named 4
   - neither 1

   The rest of the interview will be in reference to that book.

2. Does (child's name) ever read or pretend to read this book?
   - yes 13
   - no 2

3. Does (child's name) prefer to share this book with you or to look at it by him/herself?
   - share 15
   - by self 0

4. Can you describe his/her behavior while looking at this book?
   - shows emotional involvement 13
   - exhibits emergent reading abilities--
     - "reads" (pretend or actual) 5
     - anticipates the story 6
     - "tries to remember every word" 1
   - interacts--
     - above emergent reading abilities
     - dramatizes 4
     - expresses intimacy 3
     - makes things up 1
   - participates with the book 6
   - attends to the pictures 6
   - sits quietly 1
   - looks through before sharing 1

5. Can you describe what you do when you share this book with (child's name)?
   - interact--
     - instruct 7
     - dramatize 6
     - attend to child's cues 6
     - intentionally change words or story 3
     - express intimacy 2
     - play games 1
   - read through without stopping 5

Appendix B (continued)

6. Who usually picks (book title) to share--you or (child's name)?
   - child 14
   - parent 1

7. About how many times have you and (child's name) shared this book?
   - range: 10-"60 to 75"
   - median: 30

   Over what period of time?
   - range: less than one month-"two or three years"
   - median: 12 months

8. Does your child ever correct you when you change the wording of this book?
   - yes 12
   - no 2
   - other 1

9. What about the book makes it a special one for (child's name)?
   - familiarity with author, characters or story 6
   - developmental/psychological issues 5
   - topic 5
   - external factors 3
   - participatory quality 3
   - illustrations 2

10. Where do the children's books that (child's name) sees come from?
    - bought 13
    - library 5
    - siblings 5
    - school or day care center 5
    - gifts 4
    - book club 3
    - grandmother 2
    - handed down from mother 1

11. What are some of the things you look for when you select a book for (child's name)?
    - child's needs for length or complexity 9
    - illustrations 6
    - child's interests 5
    - parent's values 5
    - educational quality 2
    - sibling's preferences 1
    - participatory qualities 1
    - reputation 1
    - realm of emotions 1
    - not look like a reader 1
    - child selects 1
    - "character books" 1

Appendix B (continued)

11.. (continued)
Which of the things you mentioned is most important?
child's needs for length and complexity 6
illustrations 2
parent's values 2
educational quality 1
participatory qualities 1

12.: About how many books are available to (child's name) at one time?
range: "15 to 16"-"a few good hundred"
median: "about 100"

Unprompted expressions of weariness about the books (from several questions) 8

APPENDIX C: The Favorite Books

Cinderella. Publishing information unavailable.

Frosty the Snowman. Racine, Wisconsin: Western Publishing Company, 1975.

Harrison, D. L. The boy with a drum. Racine, Wisconsin: Golden Press, 1980.

Hill, E. Where's Spot? New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980.

Hoff, S. Danny and the dinosaur. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.

Korr, D. Cookie Monster and the cookie tree. Racine, Wisconsin: Western Publishing Company, 1980.

Krauss, R. How Spider saved Christmas. New York: Windmill Books (Simon & Schuster), 1970.

Lerner, S. A day in the life of Ernie and Bert. Chicago: Playskool, Inc., 1975.

Rey, H. A. Feed the animals. Boston: Sandpiper Houghton Mifflin Books, 1944.

Scarry, R. Richard Scarry's find your ABC's. New York: Random House, 1973.

Seuss, Dr. The cat in the hat. New York: Random House (Beginner Books), 1957.

Seuss, Dr. Marvin K. Mooney will you please go now! New York: Random House, 1972.

Stone, J. Would you like to play hide and seek in this book with lovable, furry old Grover? New York: Random House, 1976.

Sukus, J. The gingerbread man. Racine, Wisconson: Western Publishing Company (date unavailable).

Swan, C. Superman a pop-up book. New York: Random House, 1979.

The three little pigs. Publishing information unavailable.